Nearly 350,000 Haitians need of assistance in wake of Hurricane Matthew – UN

7 October – The path of devastation wrought by Hurricane Matthew throughout the Caribbean region has left some 350,000 people in need of immediate assistance in Haiti, the United Nations relief wing reported today, estimating that the death on the tiny island could be in the hundreds.

“There is a lot of suffering, a lot of hardship; some of the communities have been almost totally destroyed by the strength of the wind. Therefore the shelters, public infrastructure including the schools [and] hospitals have been affected,” Enzo di Taranto, Head of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Haiti said in an interview with UN Radio.

He added that there also has been significant damage to the country’s electrical and water provision systems.

Meanwhile, the UN World Food Programme (WFP) reports that very little is known about the island’s most isolated and impoverished areas, including the towns of Les Cayes, Port Salut and Jérémie, all located in the south-west Department of...
Grande Anse et Sud, where the hurricane first made landfall. According to the agency, all the towns suffered severe flooding.

**WFP’s efforts on the ground**

The agency has already prepositioned 7.5 million pounds of food, including high-energy biscuits for families whose homes and food stocks have been destroyed or damaged.

In addition, WFP reports that there is 25 tons of food locally available in Jeremie for immediate distribution. These local food rations will enable 9,000 people to meet their immediate food needs for one week.

In the long run, Haitian farmers, and producers of the countries staple foods, including plantain, will face serious challenges to recover. WFP reports that up to 80 per cent of the harvest has been lost in some areas.

**UNICEF sounds alarm on behalf of 500,000 children in hard-hit areas**

An estimated 500,000 school going children live in Grande Anse and Ground South departments in southern Haiti, the areas worst-hit by Hurricane Matthew, and, according to a briefing from the UN Children’s Fund UNICEF today, an estimated 175 of their school were severely damaged while 150 others across the country are being used as shelters.

“The priority is to ensure that children have access to safe drinking water as they are particularly vulnerable to water-borne diseases,” UNICEF spokesperson Christophe Boulierac told reporters in Geneva, adding that several health facilities have been damaged and need to be repaired.

Additionally, UNICEF estimates that up to 80 per cent of the homes in the southern part of the country are damaged and nearly 16,000 people are staying in temporary shelters.

On 4 October, hurricane Matthew made landfall in south-west Haiti as a very intense Category 4 Hurricane, with maximum sustained winds of 230 km/h. It then crossed the department of Grand’Anse (south-western Haiti) and moved towards Cuba. Haiti remains in the highest alert phase ‘Red Vigilance.’

**Colombian Government and FARC-EP request UN to authorize Mission to continue supporting ceasefire**

7 October – The Colombian Government and the country’s largest rebel group announced today that they are willing to press ahead on the goals of the historic peace accord that was rejected by voters this past weekend, while the two sides also requested that the United Nations Mission in the country continue its work, particularly relating to monitoring the ceasefire.

In a joint statement from Havana, which has hosted the landmark peace negotiations since 2012, the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People’s Army (FARC-EP) reaffirmed their commitment to the bilateral and definitive ceasefire and cessation of hostilities today, while also requesting Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the Security Council to authorize the UN Mission in the country to continue coordinating the tripartite Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, particularly relating to the ceasefire.

The Monitoring and Verification Mechanism – with the participation of the government and the FARC-EP, coordinated by UN Mission – will be responsible for monitoring and verifying that the parties will comply with a jointly defined protocol, particularly related to the ceasefire-related rules.
The request of the parties to the Secretary General and the Security Council seeks authorization for the UN Mission to exercise the functions of “monitoring, verification, resolution of differences, recommendations, reports and coordination of the Tripartite Monitoring and Verification Mechanism under [UN Security Council] Resolution 2261 (2016).”

The Colombian Government and the FARC-EP also invited the countries contributing to the UN Mission in Colombia with unarmed observers to continue deploying their men and women, who will continue to have all the necessary safety guarantees.

The request from the parties comes as Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos was today awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, about which Mr. Ban said in a statement issued by his office: "This special recognition offers hope and encouragement necessary to Colombians."

“The results of the 2 October plebiscite should not divide the millions of Colombians who strive to build a peaceful country. This award says to them: you have come too far to turn back now. The peace process should inspire our world,” the UN chief added.

**Children in flood-ravaged DPRK face ‘second wave of danger’ as winter rapidly closes in – UNICEF**

7 October – After two months of intense flooding, the Democratic Republic of Korea (DPRK) is now facing another looming danger as a severe winter is closing with thousands of children still in need of urgent assistance, according to the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and partner agency Save the Children.

According to Oyunsaihan Dendevnorov, UNICEF Representative in the DPRK: “Thousands of children are suffering, and the impending winter will trigger a second disaster if we do not increase assistance for children and families.”

Ms. Dendevnorov added in a joint press release that children’s suffering will get worse without more attention, because “they have already lost everything: clean water, food, medicine and shelter.”

“The situation right now is urgent and on an enormous scale not seen here in decades. That’s why we need the international community to step up and immediately increase funding for this emergency response,” said Paolo Fattori, Save the Children Program Director from the capital, Pyongyang.

UNICEF reported that nearly 70,000 people are homeless, with another 600,000 in need of help because of the floods, which have already killed 130 people. “Without more urgent assistance, children are likely to endure even more suffering,” stated UNICEF and Save the Children.

“Come the end of October we’re likely to see sub-zero temperatures and snowfall as winter sets in, and winter can be extremely long and bitter here,” explained Ms. Fattori.

UNICEF and Save the Children have already delivered humanitarian aid to DPRK, including emergency shelters, purification tablets and hygiene kits to assist the victims of flooding.

There is still a lot to be done, such as repairing broken water systems, and distributing basic items like food, which is why humanitarian agencies are appealing for $28.2 million in funding to meet the immediate and long-term needs of the people in DPRK.
Labour disparity between girls and boys perpetuates gender stereotypes, UNICEF report shows

7 October – Ahead of the International Day of the Girl Child on 11 October, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) today released a report warning that the worldwide disparity between unpaid household chores assumed by girls aged five through 14 as compared to their male counterparts, amounts to 40 per cent more time – or 160 million more hours a day.

“The overburden of unpaid household work begins in early childhood and intensifies as girls reach adolescence,” said Anju Malhotra, Principal Gender Advisor at the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in a press release.

“As a result, girls sacrifice important opportunities to learn, grow and just enjoy their childhood,” she stated.

The report, Harnessing the Power of Data for Girls: Taking stock and looking ahead to 2030, underscores that the disproportionate burden of domestic work begins early, with girls between five and nine years old spending 30 per cent more time, or 40 million more hours a day, on household chores than boys their age. The gap grows as girls get older, with 10 to 14 year olds spending 50 per cent more time, or 120 million more hours each day.

The report includes the first global estimates on the time girls spend doing household chores such as cooking, cleaning, caring for family members and collecting water and firewood. It also notes that girls’ work is less visible and often undervalued.

According to UNICEF, too often, adult responsibilities, such as caring for family members, including other children, are imposed on girls. Time spent on chores limits a girl’s time to play, socialize with friends, study and be a child. Additionally, in some countries, collecting firewood and water puts girls at risk of sexual violence.

“This unequal distribution of labour among children also perpetuates gender stereotypes and the double-burden on women and girls across generations,” added Ms. Malhotra.

Also detailed in the report is that girls in South Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, between the age of 10 and 14, spend nearly double the amount of time on household chores than that of boys – with those in Burkina Faso, Yemen and Somalia shouldering the most disproportionate burden. At 26 hours every week, girls in Somalia spend the greatest amount of time on household chores.

“Quantifying the challenges girls face is the first critical step towards meeting the Sustainable Development Goal on gender equality and breaking down barriers that confront the world’s 1.1 billion girls,” said UNICEF Chief of Data and Analytics Attila Hancioglu.

In addition to household chores, the report presents data on girl-related issues addressed by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including violence, child marriage, female genital mutilation and education.

Achieving the SDGs that address these issues and empowering girls with the knowledge, skills and resources they need to reach their full potential not only helps them, but can also drive economic growth, promote peace and reduce poverty.
Citing ‘serious protection gaps,’ UN refugee agency assists traumatized populations in northern Nigeria

7 October – Most civilians living in areas of northern Nigeria recaptured by the armed forces from Boko Haram since the start of the year still face serious protection problems and lack the most basic assistance, with women particularly at risk, the United Nations refugee agency warned today.

Reporting the initial findings of staff who had been conducting screenings in the past fortnight on needs and vulnerability in newly accessible areas of crisis-torn Borno state, William Spindler, spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) told the regular bi-weekly press briefing in Geneva that the agency’s team and partners had been interviewing community leaders and individuals about their situation in several towns in the region, including Monguno, Bama, Dikwa, Konduga, Mafa, Magumeri and Shani.

He said they had detected a “high level of vulnerability among people displaced by Boko Haram with nearly every family affected by very worrying protection issues and that some of these people live in fear that the insurgency group could attack them again.”

Indeed, the agency uncovered a similar pattern of vulnerability throughout the assessment: children being sent on to the streets to beg for food and money; many people without a safe to sleep, with some camping in dilapidated schools; mothers whose husbands were kidnapped or who have disappeared have been left to care for as many as 10 children alone in places where they struggle to work or earn money.

More than 60,000 people living in Monguno area were relocated to nine other sites as the military operations continue to take place in the northern part of Borno state in the effort to oust Boko Haram. In Kuya site, there is a great need of regular supplies of aid, as 7,500 people are living in dilapidated school buildings and makeshift shelters, and experience major food shortages, said Mr. Spindler.

“The authorities and some aid agencies have distributed food but on an irregular basis and it is vital that distributions be stepped up and made more regular,” stated the spokesperson.

The UN refugee agency stressed that it is currently working on finding a new site for displaced people as well as preparing to deliver relief items such as mattresses, mats, solar lanterns, cooking supplies, mosquito nets, jerry cans, slippers, female hygiene materials, soap, and detergent, to the vulnerable families in Monguno.

Mr. Spindler underscored the importance of providing more humanitarian aid to the people of Nigeria. “Even though several agencies are providing life-saving treatment, malnutrition remains rampant in Monguno and other newly accessible areas,” with children suffering from severe malnutrition, he added.

Due to the ongoing insecurity, and presence of land mines in villages and fields, many inhabitants are unlikely to return home. UNHCR is working with the authorities and other aid agencies to help them develop a new site in Monguno to improve the accommodations.

In the past two years, nearly 1.88 million people fled Boko Haram violence, while 2 million people have been forcibly displaced in Nigeria, the UNHCR reported.
According to UNHCR, Nigerian military operations earlier in 2016 in the country’s north-east pushed Boko Haram out of a sweep of some major towns, such as Monguno, 140 kilometres north of the Borno state capital, Maiduguri, and freeing tens of thousands of people from the insurgents’ rule.

**Globalization must leave no one behind, senior UN officials tell joint meeting on socio-economic issues**

7 October – At a joint meeting of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the General Assembly’s main economic and financial committee, the respective heads of the two UN bodies today highlighted the need for the benefits of globalization to reach all countries and all peoples.

“We have a responsibility to promote narratives that acknowledge that sustainable prosperity for all will come through inclusion rather than exclusion,” said ECOSOC President Frederick Shava in his opening remarks to the joint meeting.

Similarly in his own remarks, Dian Triansyah Djani, Chair of the General Assembly’s Second Committee highlighted: “In our world of gaps, there should be special attention of enabling global environment for countries, in particular the developing countries, to provide a considerable share to the global achievements of the SDGs [Sustainable Development Goals].”

‘2030 Agenda provides answers to questions global citizens are asking’

The annual joint meeting is held every year to discuss important economic and financial issues among both bodies’ membership. This year it was under the theme *The changing political economy of globalization: Multilateral institutions and the 2030 Agenda.*

Further in his remarks, Mr. Djani highlighted the importance of collective action for the achievement of SDGs. “We, collectively, will have to demonstrate that the 2030 Agenda provides the answers to the questions being asked by global citizens. The many should work together so the few helpless one are not left behind because of globalization,” he emphasized.

Also, Mr. Shava underlined the need to change the “political narratives” that advocate for isolationism, “We have a responsibility to promote narratives that acknowledge that sustainable prosperity for all will come through inclusion rather than exclusion,” he said.

“Too daunting are the challenges of climate change, poverty, conflicts and terrorism, to name a few. The increasingly complex nature of these challenges calls for global solutions as no one country can deal with these issues alone,” the ECOSOC President added.

**World transformed by seismic events – from iPhone to financial meltdown in 18 months**

The joint meeting today also featured a keynote address by Pulitzer Prize winning journalist and *New York Times* Op-Ed columnist Thomas Friedman who in his speech stressed: “We were in an age of acceleration where we needed to reimagine and reflect.” The world is witnessing three non-linear accelerations all at the same time: the market (globalization), Mother Nature (climate change, population growth), and Moore’s Law (technology).

These three accelerations are reshaping the world’s politics, geopolitics, the workplace, community, and ethics, he continued.

Mr. Freidman went on to recount a series of seismic social and technological events that occurred in 2007, when, among
others: Steve Jobs unveiled the iPhone beginning the smartphone/apps revolution; Facebook went global; Twitter went global; Airbnb hit the marketplace; “Amazon came out with something called the Kindle;” Github emerged; and IBM launched Watson.

Further, he said the cost of sequencing a human genome went from around $100 million down to $1, Google bought YouTube, Intel went off silicon to expand Moore’s Law, and cloud computing took off. “2007 was the biggest technological inflection point since Gutenberg invented the printing press, and we missed it [because] the 2008 economic and financial collapse happened right after,” he said.

Subsequently, the market is being fundamentally reshaped. “This is not your grandmother’s globalization,” said Mr. Friedman. Although trade in physical goods and financial products and services – the hallmarks of 20th century globalization – have flattened out and even declined in recent years, the globalization of flows means the world has never been more interconnected.

If you want to make something, you’re living in the greatest period in history, but if you want to break something, you’re also living in the greatest period in history – Thomas Friedman

“And you haven’t seen anything yet,” he continued, noting that the flows of friends, of renters, opinions, crowdfunding, instant messages, peer-to-peer payments, pictures, education, college courses, design tools, music, video, news, cloud-based tools, searches, raw video, “all of these flows are exploding, and they are the new globalization tying us together.” As such, he argued that the country that built infrastructure and educated its people to connect up to more [of these] flows will be the country that thrives in the 21st century.

Mother Nature is exponentially changing too, through climate change, population growth, and biodiversity loss. “You’re all familiar with this one, but Mother Nature is going through her own exponential changes, which we’re seeing in Florida right now,” he noted.

Mr. Friedman went on to stress that the workplace would be irrevocably altered and it is necessary to convert artificial intelligence to intelligent assistance and algorithms to allow workers to adapt to exponential change. Lifelong learning will be essential, and “building walls will not stop this change.” Politics and geopolitics would have to adapt as well, as parties will need to become more heterodox and less ideological, or fail.

Lastly, ethics will have to evolve. “If you want to make something, you’re living in the greatest period in history, but if you want to break something, you’re also living in the greatest period in history,” he said. “What every human being believes now matters.” It will be necessary to bring back the ‘Golden Rule’ through strong families and healthy communities.
Nobel Peace Prize a timely message to all Colombians who have toiled so hard for peace – UN chief

7 October – Following the awarding of the 2016 Nobel Prize for Peace to Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said today that the award is a timely message to all who have strived hard for peace, and that it provides needed hope and encouragement to all Colombians.

“It tells them to keep working until they have brought the peace process to a successful conclusion,” said Mr. Ban in a statement issued by his office.

“I commend the statements of all concerned that they are committed to peace, and I welcome the continuing commitment of the Parties to the cease-fire, if leaders conduct their dialogue with pragmatism, focused on the Colombian people's desire of for peace,” he added.

In today's statement, the UN chief also said that the results of the 2 October plebiscite should not divide the Colombian people who are working to build a peaceful country and that he hailed the dialogue that has started on the way forward.

He further commended the statements of all concerned actors in the country that they are committed to peace, and hailed the continuing commitment of the Parties to the cease-fire, if leaders conduct their dialogue with pragmatism, focused on the Colombian people's desire of for peace.

“This award says to them: you have come too far to turn back now. The peace process should inspire our world,” the Secretary-General said.

UN condemns deadly attack on ‘refugee hosting area’ in western Niger

7 October – United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has condemned the attack against a security post at a refugee hosting area in Tazalit, in the Tahoua region of Niger, bordering Mali, on 6 October, in which at least 22 members of Niger’s security forces were killed and several others were injured.

“The Secretary-General extends his deepest condolences to the families of the victims and to the Government and people of Niger. He wishes a swift recovery to the injured,” according to a statement issued today by Mr. Ban’s spokesperson.

The statement went on to say that Mr. Ban calls on the authorities of Niger to pursue and bring the perpetrators of this crime to justice, and the he urges the Government of Niger to further reinforce security around refugee camps and other vulnerable targets.

According to William Spindler, spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which also strongly condemned the attack, the ‘hosting area’ currently hosts almost 4,000 refugees, however none were harmed.
during the attack.

The agency said the armed assailants are reported to have arrived at the site in two pickup trucks. Witnesses say that following the attack, the assailants stayed in the area for up to two hours, and looted the health centre, stealing vital medical stocks. They also burned a UNHCR ambulance. No UNHCR staff or partners were present when the attack took place. The attackers then stole a military vehicle and fled, before support arrived.

“UNHCR strongly condemns these acts of violence against people who were working to protect and secure the safety of vulnerable Malian refugees, who have been forced to flee their country since violence and civil war broke out in 2012,” he said, adding that UNHCR is also troubled by the increasing number of violent incidents in the western regions of Niger bordering Mali, including ambushes, armed robbery and mine incidents.

Immediately following the attacks, UNHCR sent a team from Niamey to the site to identify needs and provide a response. Senior staff will travel to the area on Saturday to meet the community and the authorities and express support and solidarity, he added.

### Reports that Yahoo aided US e-mail surveillance draw concern of UN human rights expert

7 October – The top United Nations expert of free expression said today that reports that Yahoo complied with United States intelligence demands by searching the e-mails of hundreds of millions of customers “raise serious human rights concerns.”

According to reports, Yahoo customized software to scan all incoming e-mail traffic for information responsive to criteria provided by the US National Security Agency or the Federal Bureau of Investigation, said a news release issued by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

“Government monitoring of digital communications, when conducted as described in recent reports, could undermine the privacy that individuals depend on in order to seek, receive and impart information online,” the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of opinion and expression, David Kaye, said, adding: “Based on the allegations reported, I have serious concerns that the alleged surveillance fails to meet the standards of necessity and proportionality for the protection of legitimate government interests.”

In a 2013 report to the UN Human Rights Council on communications surveillance, the previous special rapporteur, Frank La Rue, concluded that government “access to communications data held by domestic corporate actors should only be sought in circumstances where other available less invasive techniques have been exhausted.”

Mr. Kaye said that Yahoo’s apparent accession to government surveillance requests, without evident legal challenge, also raises concern about the involvement of technology companies in questionable government programs that impact freedom of expression, recalling his June 2016 report on the private sector and freedom of expression in the digital age.

“States place undeniable pressures on the private information and communication technology sector that often lead to serious restrictions on the freedom of expression,” the 2016 report stated. Mr. Kaye reiterated that companies in all areas of the industry “are capable of establishing and exercising varying degrees of leverage in their relationships with States to resist or mitigate the harm caused by abusive application of the law.”

His report also highlighted that private entities should be evaluated on the steps they take both to promote and undermine freedom of expression, even in hostile environments unfriendly to human rights.
Independent Experts and Special Rapporteurs, are appointed by the Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a country situation or a specific human rights theme. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.

**Ban highlights importance of sea tribunal as legal body commemorates its 20th anniversary**

7 October – Recalling the renewed focus on seas and oceans, including as illustrated in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said today that as the global law of the sea continues to grow in relevance, so does its international tribunal.

“To guarantee the capacity of the oceans to continue to provide for humanity’s many and varied needs in a sustainable manner, we must do much more to ensure the uniform and consistent application of the Convention,” he added.

In his remarks, Mr. Ban highlighted the uniqueness of the Tribunal as it can settle not only disputes among States but also between the appropriate organs of the International Seabed Authority (a body established to organize, regulate and control all mineral-related activities in the international seabed area beyond the limits of national jurisdiction) and both public and private entities acting as contractors, through its Seabed Disputes Chamber.

He added that the importance of the Tribunal was also reinforced, as evidenced through its recent confirmation, in Case No. 21, concerning the request for an advisory opinion submitted by the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission that it can issue Advisory Opinions when an international agreement related to the purposes of the Convention specifically provides for this.

Further highlighting the importance of the Convention on the Law of the Sea, informally known as UNCLOS, Mr. Ban said that it continues to provide the overarching legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out and that it allows for the further development of specific areas of the law of the sea and is thus capable of adapting to the evolving needs of the international community.

In conclusion, the Secretary-General expressed hope that the commemoration will encourage even more States to make use of the tools available to them under the Convention to settle international disputes related to the application and interpretation of the Convention on the Law of the Sea and the use of the world’s oceans.

The International Tribunal is an independent judicial body established by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea to adjudicate disputes arising out of the interpretation and application of the Convention. The body is composed of 21 independent members, elected from among persons with the highest reputation for fairness and integrity and of recognized competence in the field of the law of the sea.
UN rights office calls for independent inquiry following numerous deaths at an Ethiopian festival

7 October – Expressing concern at increasing unrest in several Ethiopian towns following deaths of a number of people in unclear circumstances in the country’s Bishoftu town, the United Nations human rights arm has called on protesters to exercise restraint and on security forces to conduct themselves in line with international human rights laws and standards.

“The protests have apparently been fuelled in part by a lack of trust in the authorities’ account of events, as well as wildly differing information about the death toll and the conduct of security forces,” Rupert Colville, a spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) told journalists at a regular press briefing at the UN Office at Geneva (UNOG).

“There is clearly a need for an independent investigation into what exactly transpired last Sunday and to ensure accountability for this and several other incidents since last November involving protests that have ended violently,” he added.

According to OHCHR, last Sunday, a number of people died after “falling in ditches or into the Arsede lake” while ostensibly fleeing security forces following a protest at the Irrecha religious festival in Bishoftu, located in the Oromia region, about 50 kilometres south-east of the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa. These incidents have caused increased unrest in several other towns in the region.

Furthermore, drawing attention to the cutting off access to mobile data services in parts of the country, including in Addis Ababa, the OHCHR spokesperson urged the Government to address the increasing tensions, including “by allowing independent observers to access the Oromia and Amhara regions to speak to all sides and assess the facts.”

He recalled that in August this year, High Commissioner Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein had requested access to the regions to enable OHCHR to provide assistance in line with the African nation’s human rights obligations. “We again appeal to the Government to grant us access,” Mr. Colville underscored.

Also at the briefing, the OHCHR spokesperson expressed concern at reports of mass arrests in the Oromia and Amhara regions.

He further noted that two bloggers – Seyoum Teshoume and Natnael Feleke – the latter from the blogging collective Zone 9, were arrested this week, for reportedly “loudly discussing” the responsibility of the Government for the deaths at last Sunday’s festival in Oromia.

“We urge the Government to release those detained for exercising their rights to free expression and opinion,” said Mr. Colville, adding, “Silencing criticism will only deepen tensions.”
Swift approval of Guatemala’s justice reform bill an ‘historic’ opportunity to fight impunity – UN rights office

7 October – Welcoming a recent draft bill to the Guatemalan Congress on constitutional justice reform, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) today urged a rapid approval by the Government while voicing concern over the growing threats against judicial authorities.

“We hope that the text will be swiftly approved by the Congress, as this represents an historic opportunity to consolidate the remarkable progress the country has achieved in the fight against impunity and corruption in recent years,” Rupert Colville, OHCHR spokesperson, told reporters at the regular bi-weekly press briefing in Geneva.

The proposal aims at improving access to justice; strengthening the independence and impartiality of judges and magistrates; depoliticizing the nomination and appointment of officials in the justice system; and recognizing indigenous peoples’ legal jurisdiction over internal matters, Mr. Colville explained.

Of particular concern, he said, are women and indigenous peoples who have historically faced obstacles. Therefore, the OHCHR office in Guatemala and other national and international rights offices have provided assistance to guarantee that the bill is in line with international human rights standards.

However, “we are really concerned at growing threats against Attorney General Thelma Aldana, who has played a crucial role in the fight against impunity and corruption in Guatemala,” Mr. Colville told the briefing.

He went on to stress the importance of ensuring that human rights defenders work in a secure environment so these crucial reforms can take place. Yet, there are worrying developments such as attacks and even death threats against the country’s judicial authorities.

Since 2016, over 100 attacks against human rights defenders and journalists have been documented, including eight killings, according to OHCHR.

UN chief welcomes decision by global aviation body to cut global greenhouse gases

7 October – United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today welcomed the yesterday’s decision of the member States of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to adopt a new emissions standard to control global greenhouse gas emissions from international airline flights.

“The Secretary-General commends this important first step to limit carbon emissions from air travel and calls for further strengthening of emissions standards as quickly as possible, in line with the scientific imperative for action,” said a statement issued by Mr. Ban’s spokesperson today.

“He encourages governments to seize the next major opportunity this month to reduce global emissions by supporting an amendment to the Montreal Protocol [on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer] to phase-down hydrofluorocarbons, a potent, short-lived greenhouse gas,” it added.
The new rules, adopted yesterday by ICAO, will curb carbon emissions from passenger and cargo airplanes as of 2020 through a carbon offset mechanism, which is voluntary until 2027. Greenhouse gas emissions from aviation are growing rapidly, with the number of flights worldwide expected to double in the next 15 years, and account for a quarter of all emissions by 2050.

The decision by ICAO member States comes just a day after the landmark Paris Agreement on climate change has crossed the final threshold that will enter into force on 4 November 2016.

Late Wednesday, the latest instruments of ratification were accepted in deposit, boosting the number of countries backing the accord to those representing more than 55 percent of world greenhouse gas emissions, as needed for implementation.

The Montreal-based ICAO works with 191 member States and aviation industry groups to reach consensus on international standards, practices and policies for the civil aviation sector.